

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF PR USING A CLASSIC O.D. TECHNIQUE

Letting everyone share the information is a communication strategy that makes what OD practitioners call an "intervention." CommCore (NYC) provides this case: When talks between NYNEX & its unions stalled, the facilitator asked negotiators to list points of agreement on a flip chart. As the pages were filled, they were tacked up around the room. The charts allowed the parties to **see** how much had already been accomplished, and motivated them to continue. Instead of allowing each side to hold onto its negotiating points as if they were secrets, the sharing of info created momentum for continued talks on the unresolved issues.

This type of "boarding" strategy is effective in many communication situations. Key rules for "boarding" include: a) have a skilled facilitator or sec'y who doesn't make value judgments on info or suggestions; b) make sure to be accurate in recording comments & positions -- verbatim is best, no interpreting. Public relations practitioners may find this, like many OD techniques, a familiar approach. It shows again why practitioners are increasingly adding OD skills to their tool kit. ◆

IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶ **212 Colleges & Universities Offer Study In Public Relations**, as listed in PRSA's "Where to Study Public Relations." Schools are in the US, Canada, Puerto Rico & Australia. Directory describes programs offered, internship opportunities, enrollment figures, tuition, accreditation. 64 are accredited by ACEJMC. For practitioners heading "back to the books", **87 offer master's degrees; 14 offer Ph.Ds.** (\$10, \$7 for mbrs, from PRSA, 33 Irving Place, NYC 10003-2376) ◆

¶ **"Research is no longer strictly an academic issue,"** says David Pincus about IABC's research competition. Papers, based on **research that practitioners can understand & apply to their jobs**, are being sought by IABC's Educator Academy. Competition is open to members & nonmembers, to scholars or practitioners. Top 3 winning papers will be awarded a \$100 prize. Deadline is Feb 15. (More info from him at Schl of Journalism, Calif State U, Fullerton 92634; 714/449-7005) ◆

¶ **If employees in your organization are being laid off**, here's a resource to share with them. Challenger, Gray & Christmas, an outplacement company, is conducting a free national job search call-in Dec 30-31 from 9am-9pm (CST). Professional counselors will answer questions & provide job search advice. Number to call is 312/332-5790 ◆

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. IPRA names board mbrs serving 2-yr terms: Barbara Burns (mng dir, Consultants in Public Relations S.A., NYC); Robert Grupp (mgr ext comms, Dow Corning, Midland, Mich); Jacques Gagnon (vp-pr, Alcan Smelters & Chemical, Montreal).

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THE RIGHT WORDS: OVERCOMMUNICATION DIMINISHES THEIR IMPORT, BUT ALSO MAKES MEMORABILITY CRITICAL -- SO THEY'RE AS VITAL AS EVER

As it becomes ever harder to break thru the clutter, and as visual media take front row, traditional uses of words seem doomed. For instance, few read paragraphic matter anymore. But buying too far into this trend is counterintuitive. Consider:

- when fewer messages/appeals get thru, **memorability** becomes the most valuable quality...and it is most often accomplished with words;
- when attacks on organizations become everyday occurrences, effective **rejoinders** are vital...and they almost always are expressed in words;
- in visual media, the 20-sec **soundbite** rules...words, again.

Phil Lesly calls it "nuggetizing." While they may debase public dialogue by oversimplifying issues, even there they can play a role by making just that point -- in memorable, irrefutable words. Some recent edifying examples:

- A sheriff trying to get people to leave the seacoast in the face of a hurricane: "If you insist on staying, I must have your names, ages, addresses & **next of kin to notify.**" (Nearly everyone left the area)
- A parishioner's response when Queer Nation staged a gay wedding at a cathedral: "This isn't the way it's written in the Bible. It wasn't **Adam & Steve** but Adam & Eve."
- A columnist questioning officialdom's attitude toward the unemployed & homeless: "I resent the fact that we take our free market system so seriously that human beings, in the final analysis, become nothing more than **one more commodity.**"

Then there's the case of The Church of Scotland, finally bringing out a New Testament in Scots language after 350 years of having English scripture imposed on it. To balance accounts -- read get even -- in this new Scots Bible **only the Devil speaks English.**



- Voters in East Detroit, Mich, decided to change their city's name to avoid what they perceive as the stigma of Detroit. Opting to align linguistically with their neighbors on the other border, tiny Grosse Point, they approved the change to **Eastpointe**.
- Adventurer Dan Eisaman promoting his cross-the-Atlantic sail in a 12-ft inflatable boat pulled by a kite, when the Coast Guard twice halted his journey: "**Mommy says you can't go out & play.**" Asked how he navigated without any navigational devices: "**You go until you run into something.**" Asked about his safety concerns: "If I die, I die. Who cares?"
- Tackling that most sensitive topic, religion, author Stephen Arterburn in his book Toxic Faith: Understanding & Overcoming Religious Addiction (how's that for memorability): "Everybody wants a miracle. They want it right now and they want it on their terms. It is the natural byproduct of a consumer society -- **God as charge card.**"
- A counterproductive example shows why **pithy statements must be filtered for potential boomerang**. White House budget director Richard Darman said the Bush Administration opposed extending jobless benefits to unemployed workers because it could be "counterproductive" with the "**perverse effect of making unemployment attractive.**"
- AP correspondent Susan Schaeffer at the First Amendment Congress, on whistleblowers: "**Truth is like water. It seeks its own level.**"
- **Teddy Kennedy** deflecting criticism of his lifestyle: "Each of us as individuals must not only struggle to make a better world, but to make ourselves better, too. I recognize my own shortcomings -- the faults in the conduct of my private life. I realize that I alone am responsible for them, and I am the one who must confront them."

WORDS CAN BE SYMBOLS, OR MAKE SYMBOLIC ACTS VIBRANT

Yes, words -- even very simple ones, strung hauntingly together -- & the symbols they accompany or portray, can still

move us -- shaping our attitudes & maybe, occasionally, even our behavior. Consider one example from our century:

Marian Anderson, the unbelievable contralto, of whom Toscanini said "**A voice like this comes once in a century**" (what a soundbite!), first African-American to appear at the Metropolitan Opera, in 1957...

Starting her US career in '35 after great success in Europe, is denied use of Washington's only concert stage (in those days), Constitution Hall, by its owner, the Daughters of the American Revolution -- because of her race (remember, D.C. is in the South)...

So she performs instead on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, to the then-unheard of crowd of 75,000. A civil rights landmark. In protest Eleanor Roosevelt bitingly resigns from the DAR -- a soundbite & symbol -- and President Roosevelt asks to address the DAR's convention, where he begins his remarks, "**Fellow immigrants!**" (power in words).

Civil rights makes progress. 30 years later, Martin Luther King leads its most memorable rally, in Washington. Where does he hold it? To recap-

ture Marian Anderson's symbol, of course at the Lincoln Memorial -- where he uses simple, basic words: "**I have a dream!**"

PR'S ROLE IN CULTURE CHANGE HIGHLIGHTED BY NEW PARADIGM: IT BEGINS WITH PARTICIPATION

The pace at which the change process takes place, as well as the assimilation of new culture, varies with the organization & the circumstances. While there are no shortcuts, one model of intervention flow -- in which pr plays a key role -- makes every step of the process smoother, and sometimes quicker.

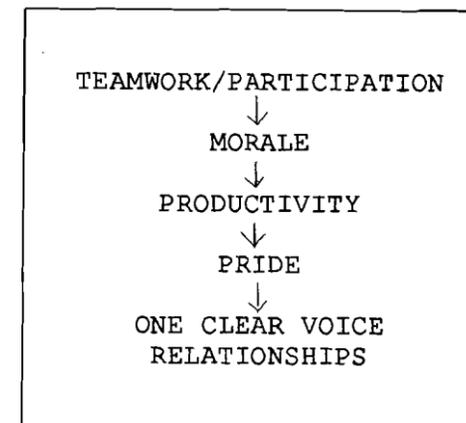
Rationale: To alter culture, whether to introduce new elements, eliminate outdated ones or just generally tighten relationships & communication (e.g. Quality programs), the first step psychologically must be participation. Reason: people won't own the change otherwise.

The best participative management style in most cases will be some form of teamwork-building or team tasking (e.g. Issue Anticipation Teams, School Community Relations Teams & similar).

Morale is in many ways self-generated, based on personality & attitude. But even the most upbeat person cannot keep high morale if teamwork is not present. Disparate agendas, turfing & other anti-teamwork actions kill morale. But teamwork builds morale.

When high-morale employees work as teams, **productivity** tends to increase. And when a group or organization has high productivity, **pride** bubbles out; you cannot contain it. They tell everyone how well they're doing, how proud they are of the organization's accomplishments.

Now you have a group of employees (or members, if it's an association) ready & **able to build external relationships**, to be effective ambassadors & speak with One Clear Voice.



UNION ASKS NLRB TO OUTLAW WORK TEAMS

12/2 Ragan Report's lead story says "work teams are under siege." NLRB will decide the fate of employee participation programs. Unions say they're anti-union and are contesting their legality via the Wagner Act, which bans firms from forming or supporting labor organizations. Test case is Electromation, Inc in Elkhart, Indiana. Teamsters lost an election to organize Electromation and blamed their defeat on company's work teams. **NLRB judge ruled they are illegal!** Company is appealing & waiting for a decision. If appealed again, it'll go to the federal circuit level, then to the US Supreme Court.